

HB 1132 -- PREGNANCY RESOURCE CENTERS

SPONSOR: Engler

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass" by the Committee on Ways and Means by a vote of 9 to 2.

This bill specifies that the cumulative amount of tax credits that may be claimed by all the taxpayers contributing to pregnancy resource centers in any one fiscal year cannot exceed \$2 million for all fiscal years ending on or before June 30, 2014, and \$2.5 million for all fiscal years beginning on or after July 1, 2014.

PROPONENTS: Supporters say that pregnancy resource tax credits enable us to leverage dollars to serve women and children in need. Over 72% of our clients live below the poverty line. An increase in this credit would enable us to serve more women and children in need. All services are free including doctor services, financial, budgeting, and long-term assistance. Pregnancy resource centers partner with other charities so services are not duplicated and look for ways to bridge the gap and help these girls. Our target age group is 16 to 24 including high school, college, and career women. We have no federal funding and operate on private donations only. This is a benevolent credit unlike most others that have helped the number of centers and services available to grow across the state. The credits allow an opportunity for the pregnancy resource centers to offer alternatives to having an abortion to women who find themselves in a crisis pregnancy. If services are not provided here, they would come to the state for help. Most women who have an abortion regret it. Their situation required it or made them believe it was the only way.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Engler; Catholic Charities of St. Louis; Brandy Meeks, Pregnancy Resource Clinic, St. Joseph, MO; Missouri Catholic Conference; Alliance for Life-Missouri; Missouri Family Network; Missouri Baptist Convention LLC; Missouri Right to Life; and Campaign Life Missouri.

OPPONENTS: Those who oppose the bill say that most pregnancy resource centers are deceptive, unregulated, disguise themselves as medical centers, and do not have a nurse or doctor on staff. Women are coming for counseling and getting medical misrepresentation and propaganda. Ultrasounds are performed by non-medical personnel. In a 2010-2012 survey of pregnancy resource centers, 69% discouraged hormonal birth control, 100% discouraged abortion and 92% of their patients were not allowed to speak to a nurse or doctor. Before the state funds this, the state should look closely because state money is not being used for good at these centers.

Testifying against the bill were NARAL Pro-Choice Missouri; and Planned Parenthood Advocates.